



*Our Community  
Our Children*

## The Need for Foster Homes to Serve Milwaukee County Children

### Number of Children in Out-of- Home Care

Although there has been a slight decline in the number of children in out-of-home care since 2003, the number remains around 3,000 on any given day.

June 2003	December 2003	June 2004	December 2004	December 2005
3,981	3,489	3,345	3,151	2,825

Of the children in out-of-home care, approximately:

- 19% are in a group home, residential care center, or a treatment foster home.
- 41% are with relatives who are either licensed foster parents or under a court-ordered kinship placement
- **40% are placed in non-relative foster homes**

Using these percentages, we anticipate 1,200 children need to be cared for by non-relative foster parents on any given day.

### Age of children entering out-of-home care.

Age at Removal	2003	2004	Jan.- Jun. 2005*
Birth-4	44%	40%	41% (74 children)
5-11	32%	32%	28% (187 children)
12-14	17%	20%	21% (140 children)
15+	7%	8%	10% (67 children)

\* Number based on the detention of 668 children during this time.

Trends indicate that the number of children age 5–11 entering care is decreasing with a proportional rise in the number of teens.

## Ethnicity of Children in Out-of-Home Care

Ethnicity	2004
American Indian/Alaskan	0.8%
Asian	0.3%
Black/African American	77.4%
Caucasian	18.4%
Hispanic (all categories)	See note below

**\* 2004 Census designations did not allow accurate tracking of children identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano. Approximately 300 children of Latino ethnicity resided in out of home care at the end of 2004, and are embedded in the race designations above.**

The number of African-American children in out-of-home care is disproportionate to the populations of both Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee. US Census Bureau data shows African-Americans make up 27% of the county's population.

## Gender

Males and females are equally represented in children entering out-of-home care.

## Sibling Groups

Trauma to a child placed in out-of-home care can be reduced by placing sibling groups together whenever possible. There is a great need for foster parents willing to accept siblings.

Generally, in 2005

- 65% of children were in placement with at least one sibling
- 46% of children entering care were from sibling groups of three or more
- 22% of the total number of children in out-of-home care were from sibling groups of three or more

There appears to be a slight increase in the number of family cases referred by the Court for ongoing case management services with three or more children in out-of-home care.

## Health Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care

### Physical health risks vary by age group

- In the birth–4 group, the leading identified health risks are asthma, premature birth, and issues related to being born cocaine positive. In 2004, 602 children in this age group were diagnosed with one or more of these health risks.
- In the 5–11 age group, the leading identified health risks are attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, asthma, enuresis (incontinence), and depression. In 2004, 802 children in this age group were identified with these health risks.
- In the 12-14 age group, the leading identified health risks are attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, depression, asthma, and reactive detachment disorder.
- In the 15+ age group, the leading identified health risks are depression, attention deficit disorder, and bipolar disorder. In 2004, 327 children in this age group were identified with these health risks.
- Teen mothers and their babies are also considered at risk of health problems. In December 2005, there were 46 teen mothers under court order living with their children in out-of-home care.

### Behavioral Issues

Many children coming into care have difficult behavioral issues, often linked to their experiences of abuse/neglect. Aggression, temper tantrums, defiance/non-compliance, and sexual acting out are frequently reported in children of all age groups. Children with difficult behavioral problems may require care beyond the expertise of the licensed foster parent and are placed in facilities offering a higher level of care, such as treatment foster homes.

A new initiative, the **Mobile Urgent Treatment Team for Foster Families** offers the assistance of trained mental health professionals from the WrapAround Milwaukee program. A 24-hour crisis hotline connects foster parents with professionals who provide an immediate crisis intervention over the phone or by visiting the home.

Training on dealing with specific behavior patterns is also provided.

## Length of Stay in Out-of-Home Care

Length of stay outside the home is directly correlated with reunification. The longer a child remains outside the home, the lower the chance of reunification.

Age	Time outside the parental home					
	0-6 mos	6-12 mos	12-18 mos	18-24 mos	>24 mos	Total
Birth-4	206	172	108	63	105	<b>654</b>
5-11	150	176	107	68	487	<b>988</b>
12-14	79	78	33	28	418	<b>636</b>
15+	78	63	49	26	524	<b>740</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>1534</b>	<b>3018*</b>

\* Numbers reflect all children in out-of-home care, including group homes, residential treatment centers, treatment foster care and other higher levels of care. 2004.

## Licensed Foster Homes

Total licensed (this includes relative and non-relative homes)

2003 1,184

2004 1,048

2005 987 (Dec.)

Approximately 80% of homes are licensed to accommodate one or two children, with the remaining 20% able to accommodate sibling groups of three or more.

### Licensed by age group (2004)

- 42.3% are licensed to accept children birth–4
- 34.6% are licensed to accept children ages 5–11
- 28.9% are licensed to accept children ages 0–18

## Ethnicity of Foster Parents\*

American Indian/Alaskan Native	5	.4%
Asian	1	.1%
Black/African American	902	75.4%
Caucasian	237	19.8%
Hispanic	26	2.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	.08%
Unknown	25	2.1%

\* Based on a total of 1,197 licensed homes. 2004.

## Annual Income of Foster Parents\*

Less Than \$11,000	141	11.8%
\$11,000-\$25,999	515	43.0%
\$26,000-\$34,999	206	17.2%
\$35,000-\$49,999	185	15.5%
\$50,000-\$74,999	102	8.5%
\$75,000 +	48	4.0%

\* Based on a total of 1,197 licensed homes. 2004.

## Retention of Foster Homes

During 2005

- 197 new homes were licensed
- 416 foster homes closed.
- For every two homes closed, only one opened.

Reasons for closure:

- 122 closed because the family adopted the foster child
- Other reasons include:
  - Foster parents needed a break
  - Household situation/family composition changed
  - Licensing felt the home was at risk

At any given time, approximately on quarter of all licensed homes are on hold and, thus, not a resource for placement. (Reasons: foster parent request, administrative hold, adoption in progress, child abuse/neglect investigation, or training not complete).

## Greatest Need

Foster homes for children of all ages are needed, but the biggest need at this time is homes to care for:

- Teens
- Sibling groups larger than 3
- Babies and toddlers